



Residential Parking Zone Policy Review Project

Draft Recommendations Summary
A Companion Document to the Draft Final Report



Public Comment Period
August 1 to October 20, 2008
See back cover for details



Too many vehicles competing for too few parking spaces

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)'s Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) program is designed to protect residential streets from the parking and traffic impacts of commuters and others. While accomplishing this, the program must also consider the often-conflicting needs of all users of the public right-of-way. Sometimes the solution is straightforward: sign on-street parking for residents. Frequently, however, it is not this easy. Residents themselves may own more vehicles than parking spaces and compete, not just with non-residents but with each other. Non-residents may be their own visitors as well as customers of nearby businesses or major institutions.

Looking at how people in Seattle want to live and travel adds complexity. Seattle is committed to building communities where people can live closer to the places they need to go and where living without a car is not only possible, but a desirable lifestyle.

SDOT's RPZ Policy Review Project addresses these challenges and opportunities. Potential solutions, discussed in this brochure, seek to reduce the impacts of vehicle travel on neighborhoods, while taking into account that, regardless of zoning, streets are public rights-of-way. Any restrictions on their use must produce a broad public benefit, not just a limited and personal one.

Project Purpose and Approach

The overall purpose of this RPZ Policy Review Project is to analyze, evaluate and redesign the program to support Seattle's goals in the areas of parking management, transportation, economic development, land use, and race and social justice.

Seattle's RPZ program was last reviewed in 1994. Since then, Seattle has changed dramatically with:

- More than 50,000 new residents

- Construction of major transit improvements including Link Light Rail, South Lake Union Streetcar, and Bridging the Gap/Transit Now bus improvements
- Adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan, with the urban village strategy, linking strong business districts to residential neighborhoods through improved pedestrian and transit access

Project Goal

The RPZ Policy Review Project goal is to design a new RPZ program that achieves the following:

- Protects residential neighborhoods from traffic impacts of large generators, including hospitals, schools, colleges, major employers, and transit stations.
- Ensures that these protections are distributed equitably.
- Supports a shift from driving to walking, biking and transit.
- Supports mixed-use neighborhoods and local business districts where proximity minimizes vehicle for travel.
- Reduces overall use of resources and vehicle emissions.
- Creates a program with simple rules, that are easily understood, and clearly applied.

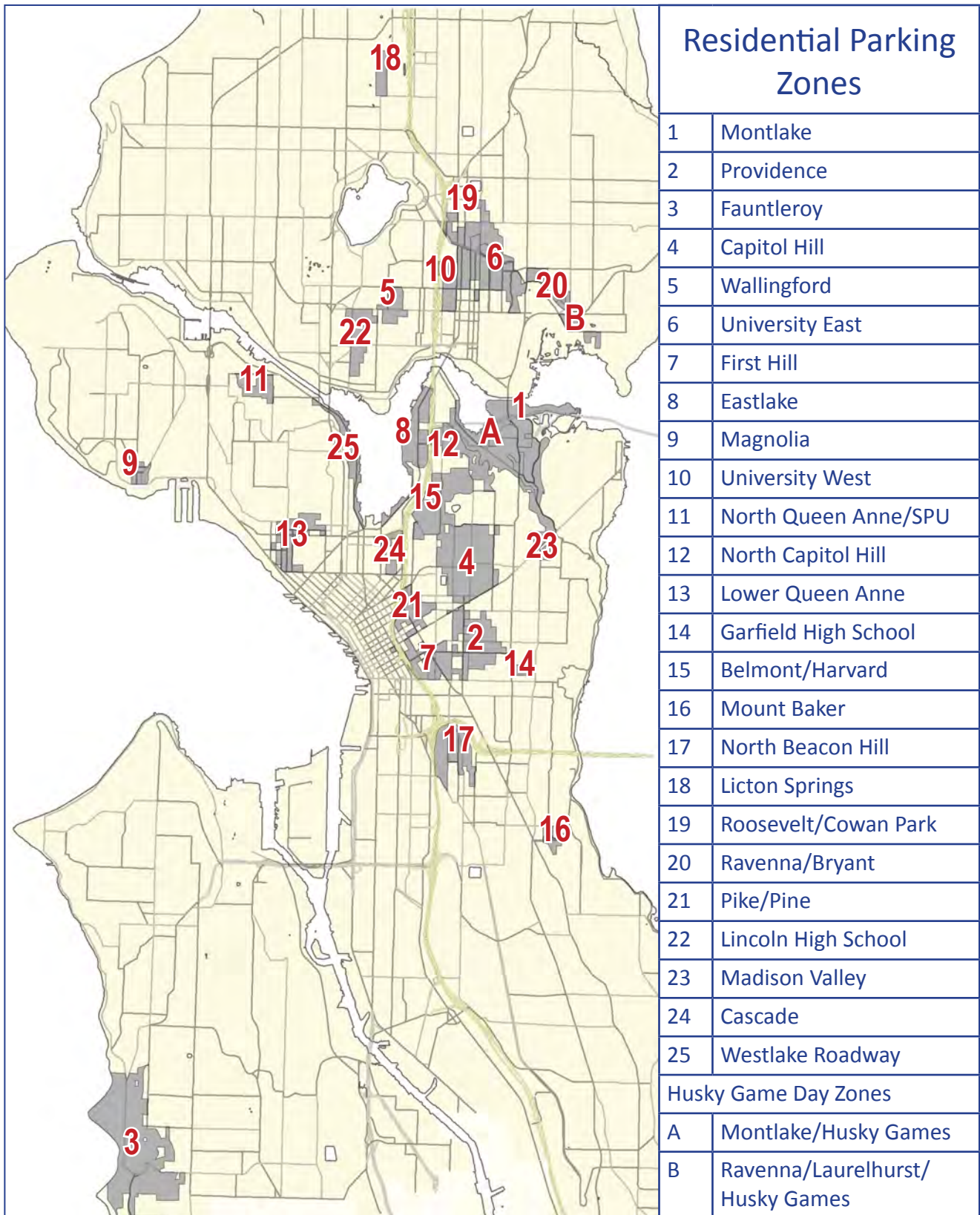
Public outreach to date

Public outreach for this project, to date, has been designed to inform residents, businesses, and major institutions about the project and gather input regarding RPZ issues and potential solutions.

- Three sounding boards – for residents, businesses and institutions – met in April and in May.
- An on-line survey was completed by over 1,100 respondents.
- Working sessions were also held with the Seattle Planning Commission, neighborhood groups and others.

Existing RPZs in Seattle

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Permits per Household

How it works today

- Currently a household may have a permit for every vehicle.
- In some RPZs, there are more cars with permits than there are on-street parking spaces, making it very difficult for people to find parking.
- The number of vehicles per household can vary greatly based on number of members and building type, e.g., apartments, large families, boarding houses.

What is proposed

- **Limit the number of permits per household** to equitably manage the supply and demand of on-street parking for all users.
- **Establish a maximum of 4 permits per household in all RPZs.**
- Where the number of people who want to park exceeds the number of on-street spaces, **balance supply and demand by limiting the number of permits per household to 2, in moderately congested areas, and to 1, in severely congested areas.**

How would this recommendation be implemented?

- Permit per household limits would be phased in at the renewal dates for each zone.
- In new zones, the decision about the number of permits per household would be made when the zone is created.
- Of the 27 current zones, it is anticipated that five zones would limit permits to one, nine zones would limit permits to two, and eleven zones would allow four. Zones A and B, which operate only on Husky Game days, would not be affected.
- A “household” would be defined as one address. An apartment house with twenty separate apartments, for example, would be considered twenty households.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Survey respondents supported limiting permits per household by almost a two-to-one margin.
- Sounding Boards said it doesn’t make sense to issue more permits than there are on-street parking spaces.



How many permits would each household in my zone be allowed?

- The chart below shows a **preliminary assignment for each zone** to one of three groups: one, two or four permits per household. These assignments are based on **the total number of on-street parking spaces in each zone, versus the number of vehicles with permits**; and also on population density, vehicles per household, the share of housing that is multi-family and projections for future growth.
- The primary goal of limiting the number of permits available to each household is to equitably share a limited resource: on-street parking. In Zone 21 Pike/Pine, for example, there are now four vehicles with permits for every on-street space. Limiting each household to only one permit will not solve the parking problem in this zone but it will add a small element of fairness in a very difficult situation.

Zone Number	Zone Name	ReasonIng
Proposed: One Permit per Household		
4	Capitol Hill	All of these urban centers currently have two or more vehicles with permits for every on-street space. Residential density is high, the share of multi-family housing is high, and future growth is expected to be moderate to very high.
7	First Hill	
13	Lower Queen Anne	
21	Pike Pine	
24	Cascade	
Proposed: Two Permits per Household		
2	Providence	For the most part these zones have close to one space for every permitted vehicle today. Most are fairly dense and have significant multi-family housing, but the zones have slightly better parking situations than those in the first group, above.
5	Wallingford	
6	University East	
8	Eastlake	
10	University West	
15	Belmont/Harvard	
17	North Beacon Hill	
20	Ravenna/Bryant	
22	Lincoln High School	
Proposed: Four Permits per Household		
1	Montlake	These zones are relatively low density, with little multi-family housing and more than one on-street space for every permitted vehicle today. The RPZs were installed to protect these areas from the traffic impacts of commuters and students; otherwise there is adequate parking for residents.
3	Fauntleroy	
9	Magnolia	
11	North Queen Anne/Seattle Pacific U	
12	North Capitol Hill	
14	Garfield High School	
16	Mount Baker	
18	Licton Springs	
19	Roosevelt/Cowan Park	
23	Madison Valley	
25	Westlake Roadway	

Guest Permits

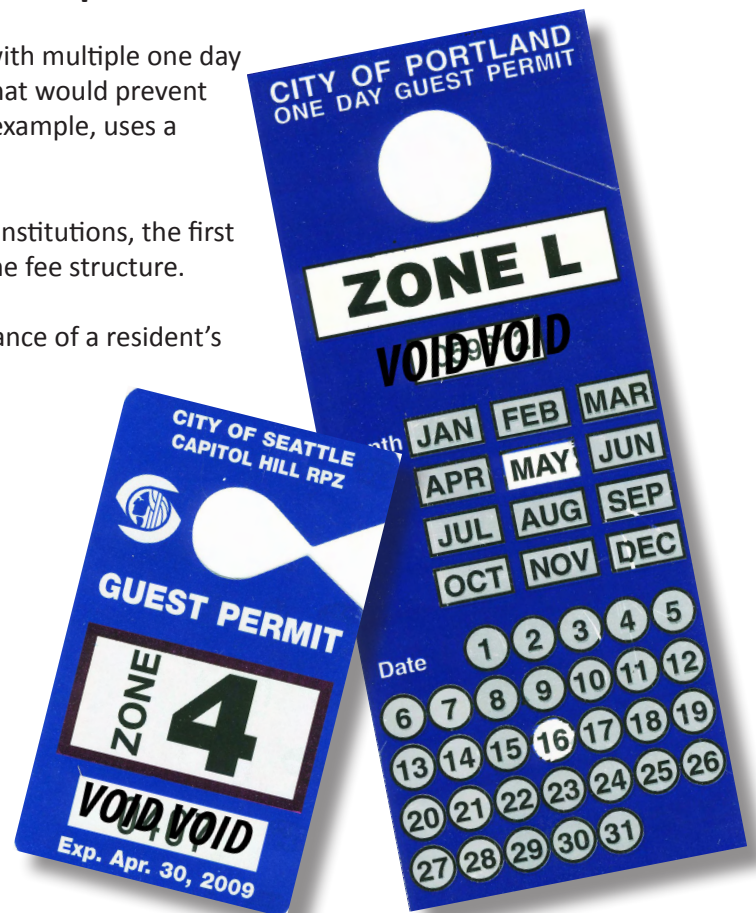
How it works today	What is proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every household is eligible for one guest permit. Guest permits are good at all times. If people have more than one guest they may borrow their neighbor's permits, but otherwise there is no convenient way to host multiple guests. Guest permits are illegally sold to area employees who use them to park on-street. Residents use guest permits on their own vehicles, perhaps unaware it is not allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change the guest permit program from one permit good all the time, to multiple permits, each good for one day. Sell guest permits in packages of ten, with a low fee for the first few packages and higher fees for subsequent packages. Allow each household up to 100 days of guest permits per year. Establish a fine for the illegal sale and use of guest permits.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- The current single use hang tag would be replaced with multiple one day permits that would display the day of use in a way that would prevent their being used over and over again. Portland, for example, uses a scratch-off permit.
- In zones where resident's fees are currently paid by institutions, the first thirty days of guest parking would fall under the same fee structure.
- Guest permits will be valid only within a certain distance of a resident's home.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Comments from survey takers strongly recommended changing the guest permit program to accommodate multiple guests.
- The Resident Sounding Board felt that residents appear to be unaware that they may not use guest permits on their own vehicles.



How it works today	What is proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permits cost \$35 for one or two years, depending on the zone. The permit fee for low income residents is \$10. In some RPZs, major institutions such as hospitals and universities or, in two cases, movie theaters, pay all or part of the permit fees. Permit fees have not increased for several years and no longer cover the administrative costs of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase permit fees to cover the administrative costs of the program. When major institutions expand, or new institutions are proposed, apply the institution's contribution to the RPZ program to program design and installation, but not to paying permit or guest fees for individual residents.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- Permit fees are set by City Council action. Preliminary analysis suggests fees would need to increase modestly to cover program costs.
- Agreements with existing institutions to pay program fees for individual residents would not be modified, unless a new master use permit is negotiated as part of a major expansion.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Survey takers strongly supported continuing the current policy of modest fees for the first permit per household, and split about 50/50 on modest fees for the second permit. By the fourth permit, however, almost 70% of respondents thought permits should cost \$100 a year or more.
- The Sounding Board representatives felt the fees should at least cover the cost of the program; opinions varied on whether fees should continue to be low or should increase substantially.
- Civic groups expressed a strong opinion that permit fees should be increased, and that fees for multiple permits, in particular, should be very high.



How it works today

- Neighborhoods may ask for consideration of an RPZ, or SDOT may include the request in a comprehensive parking planning effort.
- SDOT and communities work together to evaluate parking needs, design zone boundaries, and gather formal support for establishing new zones.
- The established process invites all stakeholders to participate in community meetings, but gives a formal voice on the approval petitions to create a zone only to residents. Stakeholders who oppose an RPZ have a more difficult time having their voices heard.
- Residents and other stakeholders with cultural or language barriers, or who lack experience working with government, lack an equal voice.

What is proposed

- Revise design and decision process for creating zones to ensure fairer and more effective community process.
- Strengthen technical guidelines for zones, to ensure RPZ will achieve desired effects.
- Expand involvement and approval process to include all community interests, including businesses.
- Address race and social justice barriers to community participation; ensure that all neighborhoods have access to appropriate parking management tools, and all citizens have opportunity to participate in defining choices.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- The proposed approach augments the current process and residents or Community Councils will still be able to initiate zones by contacting SDOT.
- The proposed process for creating new zones is more rigorous and broader based than the current process. SDOT's new Community Parking Program already encompasses many of the goals of the proposed approach, including a comprehensive look at parking problems and solutions, versus an approach that works only towards a single solution.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Sounding Board representatives expresses support for a process that doesn't pit people against each other, includes a broader circle of interests, is flexible, and where SDOT provides more support for community efforts to solve parking problems.



RPZs in Mixed Use Areas and in the Evening 9

How it works today

Mixed Use Areas

- Four RPZs are located in Urban Centers where the traditional dividing lines between residential and commercial development are increasingly blurred. With people literally living “over the shop,” the parking needs of residents, visitors and customers often overlap. Equitably balancing these competing needs is a challenge.

Evening Zones

- Nine of the current RPZs operate past 8 PM. One, Zone 3 Fauntleroy, protects a residential area from ferry riders who might permanently store a car on the mainland. But the others face the same challenges as zones in mixed-use areas: How to balance the parking needs of residents with those of businesses operating in the evening, particularly small businesses that cannot provide off-street customer parking.

What is proposed

- SDOT will explore a broad range of tools, including RPZs and others, to manage on-street parking to meet the complex and overlapping parking demands in mixed-use areas and in areas where businesses or events operate in the evening.
- Seek to increase parking availability in the evening, including negotiating shared evening use of private daytime parking; and implementing both-sides-of-the-street parking where there is now parking on only one side.
- In evening zones, consider reserving one side of the street for RPZ-permit parking, with unrestricted or paid parking on the other.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- SDOT will respond to requests for handling residential parking issues in mixed-use areas or in the evening with a comprehensive parking planning effort.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Sounding Board members’ views varied. Some thought care was needed to ensure that parking problems for residents are addressed. Others thought a comprehensive approach was need to fairly balance the different parking needs of various users, including residents and customers.



How it works today	What is proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are not enough Parking Enforcement Officers (PEOs) to adequately enforce all of the operating hours of the current RPZs. • Vehicle decal permits and guest permits can easily be sold and used by commuters and others because of the design of the permits and because PEOs do not have access to real-time data in the field to enforce permits. • Four-hour parking limits are particularly difficult to enforce because people can leave work to move their cars. • Inconsistencies between the hours and parking restrictions in different zones and within zones further confuse residents and other parkers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Parking Enforcement Officers and dedicate more hours to enforcing RPZs. • Use new technology to provide PEOs with in-the-field access to a database of valid permits and corresponding vehicle license numbers. • Modify permits and guest passes to improve customer service and eliminate fraudulent use. • To the extent possible, establish consistent hours of operation for daytime zones.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- Proposed recommendations will require new budget authority, changes in legislation, and improvements in technology, including new database software for the RPZ program.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Survey takers and Sounding Board members were very strong in defining enforcement as the number one issue that determines whether or not RPZs are effective.



How it works today	What is proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents who want information about the RPZ program, or who want to apply for a new permit, can find some information online. However, to determine if they live in a zone, they must call the City, and usually must go to City offices to obtain an initial permit. Applicants must provide paper copies of the documents that prove they are eligible for a permit. Permits can be renewed by mail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to allow residents to find information about the RPZ program by phone, and to apply and pay for permits in person, if they choose to do so. Establish a new, online capability that will allow people to find out if they live in a zone, and to apply and pay for permits online. Include the capability for most customers to automatically verify eligibility online.

How would these recommendations be implemented?

- The current software used to manage the RPZ program is outdated and does not support online applications, fee payment or renewals. New software would be installed in 2009 to support online processing, eligibility verifications and payment.
- Agreements would need to be negotiated with other agencies to automatically verify residency and vehicle registration.

What have we heard from public outreach to date?

- Only 5% of survey takers said that getting their permit was very difficult for them, but there was extremely strong support for going to an online system, to avoid the time and parking issues associated with having to go downtown.



We'd like to hear your thoughts

How to comment

This brochure summarizes the major draft recommendations for future improvements in the RPZ program.

You can help improve the RPZ Program by providing your comments and ideas regarding key policy and process recommendations.

Website with more details and comment form

Please visit SDOT's RPZ Policy Review Project on the web.

http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/parking/rpz_policy_review.htm

The website includes the following project reports, along with a comment form:

Residential Parking Zone Policy Review Project, Draft Final Report
Residential Parking Zone Policy Review Project, Survey Results
Residential Parking Zone Policy Review Project, Best Practices

Contact

If you have additional questions about these recommendations, please contact Mary Catherine Snyder by email: marycatherine.snyder@seattle.gov or by phone: 206-684-8110.

The comment period ends October 20, 2008.
We look forward to hearing from you.